

## BACKING INTO THE FUTURE WITH COLUMBUS: HISTORIAN CARLOS CORTÉS ON AMERICAN MULTICULTURALISM

**F**or the last 20 years, historian Carlos Cortés has been raising questions about ethnic diversity in America and how we can build a multicultural society. Recently he has looked to the balancing of pluribus and unum in the nation's long-held motto, "E Pluribus Unum." He is professor of history at the University of California, Riverside, currently working on a study about how U.S. films have represented ethnic groups and world cultures. In preparation for the Council's summertime chautauqua programs to commemorate the Columbian Quincentenary, Executive Director Jim Quay spoke recently with Cortés, who will deliver the 1992 Public Humanities Lecture in San Jose this June.

**Quay:** Here we are. It's 1992 and the Columbus Quincentenary is upon us. And I wonder if you think that the way we are approaching this event says a lot about the way we make judgments using history.

**Cortés:** I think that's exactly right. Suddenly you've got pressures to line up on one side or the other, for or against Columbus.

**Quay:** So it seems. I've been rather dismayed that the questions are so simplistic: "Where do you stand?" "Are you for or against Columbus?" "Do you agree with Kirkpatrick Sale's account or do you not?" They all seem to ask "Which side are you on?"

**Cortés:** Yes, you're supposed to pick your side. But the alternative to this polarism is not a matter of searching for some supposed single middle ground, because that assumes a straight-line spectrum of interpretations. We have polaric, dichotomous



Carlos Cortés

positions, but there are a whole variety of very complex positions in the middle. You could get many very intelligent people arraying themselves in different kinds of clusters, depending upon the particular kinds of questions being asked about Columbus, without having to get into the hero/villain dichotomy.

I think one of the key things that's needed is learning to avoid dichotomous thinking both in looking at history and in applying that history to where we go in the future. Let's put this in a social context with something like the metaphor of the American melting pot. Some people ask: what happened to the American melting pot? Why is the American melting pot no longer working as it once did? My argument is that the American melting pot isn't working because it never did work fully – not because, dichotomously, it did work

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and suddenly it isn't working anymore. I would argue that it has always worked only incompletely and selectively, because you had racial segregation sitting side by side with the concept of the melting pot, and segregation prevented certain people from even entertaining the idea of trying to enter the melting pot.

I've also stopped using the cultural pluralism metaphor, because it projects an equally false picture of society, an image of hundreds of separate cultures marching side by side, having little contact or little in common. I used "cultural pluralism" in my writings 15 years ago, but I don't any more, because like the melting pot, it provides an invalid metaphor both for looking at the past and thinking about the future.

**Quay:** As you know, this summer the Council is sponsoring a chautauqua program called "Columbus & After: Rethinking the Legacy." Scholars are going to portray Columbus, Junípero Serra, Jessie Benton Fremont, and Chief Joseph. As a historian, what kind of judgments do you think can legitimately be made about historical figures such as these? There must be something between not questioning their actions because they were simply products of their time and questioning their actions as if they had been conscious of contemporary categories.

**Cortés:** Ultimately, I think there are certain standards of human conduct that people of any time period should be held accountable for. On the other hand, there is the danger of expecting them to be imbued with the sort of knowledge, sensitivity, and thought processes that we have today – that's "presentism." The issue raised at the Nuremberg trials was, "you knew what you were doing, and just saying you're a product of your time and culture doesn't relieve you of personal responsibility." Let's take Columbus for example: I think one can legitimately hold him accountable for having manacled Indians, enslaved them, and taken them back to Spain; this was Columbus forcibly taking other human beings, putting them in chains, and

### CORTÉS TO SPEAK IN SAN JOSE

**O**n Thursday, June 11 at 8 p.m., historian Carlos Cortés will deliver a public lecture in downtown San Jose entitled, "Backing into the Future: Columbus, Cleopatra, Custer & California's Diversity Revolution," exploring the connections between interpretations of the past and our society's future.

"The United States has been involved in this Pluribus-Unum balancing act since its inception," he wrote in *Change* magazine's Sept./Oct. 1991 issue. "That's what federalism and the separation of powers are all about... Such Pluribus values as freedom, individualism, and diversity, live in constant and inevitable tension with such Unum values as authority, conformity, and commonality."

A veteran speaker and trainer on diversity and multicultural issues, Cortés has lectured extensively on topics of race and ethnicity, media literacy, and the implications of ethnic and global diversity for education, government, and private business. A former Council member who also received its 1980 Outstanding Humanist Award, Cortés has been named 1989 national Multicultural Trainer of the Year by the American Society for Training and Development.

The free public lecture and discussion will be held at Mother Olson's Inn, 72 North Fifth Street in San Jose.

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# RETHINKING COLUMBUS, *Continued*

ripping them from the land where they lived – that's a legitimate criticism, not a presentist judgment.

However, to say that Columbus is personally responsible for having opened the door for slavery in the western hemisphere, as if he should have had some futuristic vision of all the possible negative ramifications of his voyage, is going too far. To expect all of those questions and issues to have been rolling around in Columbus's mind is quite different from holding him responsible for enchaining Indians and forcing them down into the hold of his ship. However, there is no precise line between where you can make legitimate universal human judgments about the past versus inappropriate criticisms based on expecting distant figures to have had a historical consciousness that they could not possibly have had before that historical process occurred.

**Quay:** Does it get more complicated when you encounter a figure like Serra?

**Cortés:** Well, yes, it gets more complicated with Serra in a secular society like the United States, that is a society that doesn't put much emphasis on the afterlife in its historical judgments. If you really believe that the most important thing is how people's souls fare in the afterlife, then Serra could be defended as believing that although the Indians might have been suffering some physical pain because of his actions, what really counted was that he was saving their souls and that their afterlife was going to be better.

In contrast, if one takes the view that the afterlife is not the important thing and that the crucial issue is life on earth, you could hold Serra more responsible for what he did. Or, if you take a Marxist approach, you might conclude that Serra was just looking for a good labor force. That's where historical judgments become more complicated, because what you are doing is imposing on the past your current values of what's really important.

**Quay:** And yet, I take you to be saying that a certain degree of presentism is always, necessarily involved with making historical judgments.

**Cortés:** Yes, because the present generates the questions we ask. It's perfectly legitimate, even inevitable, to use contemporary concerns to rethink the past. What is not legitimate is to take contemporary knowledge, and particularly contemporary categories, and impose them on the past as if people in the past were operating with that knowledge and within those same kinds of categories. That's exactly what the presentists do.

It was valuable, for example, that the civil rights movement of the sixties forced historians to ask, why are there sit-ins now? What is it about our history that would have brought us to the point that Blacks had to get their heads beaten in to gain the right to vote and to be able to eat in

restaurants? That was a perfectly legitimate use of the present to rethink the past. But to go back and accuse Abraham Lincoln of being a racist because he didn't think about desegregating restaurants would be imposing our thinking on, as opposed to raising questions about, the past.

This raises another question. Why has the debate over the rewriting of our history become so important to us now? Is this just an academic game among historians? The answer is, no. History is important to us on two levels. One is that so much of the way we're heading, or think we're heading, is dependent upon the way we redefine the trajectory which got us to where we are. The second is that the debate over our past influences both the way we teach history in the schools and the way we teach history outside of the schools -- whether you're talking about Oliver Stone writing  *JFK*  or the California Council for the Humanities carrying out public programs to raise historical issues.

We now realize that how we think about where we came from truly influences our future. If you had gone to Las Vegas five years ago and put down a triple bet that as of 1992 there would no longer be an East and West Germany, there would be no Soviet Union, and there would be no Yugoslavia, you could probably have gotten long enough odds to be able to retire today. And yet all three of those changes were products not of contemporary conditions alone, but of long-standing historical forces and historical thinking. So the way we think about our past really has a dominating influence on how we move into the future.

To me, this is one of the things that separates the humanist from the contemporarily mesmerized social

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scientist. The humanist looks at these long, dynamic, impelling trajectories and sees them as part of the individual culture we each carry around with us, while many social scientists tend to pump a bunch of contemporary statistics into a computer and make projections based only on current conditions.

**Quay:** What drew you as a young man into the study of history?

**Cortés:** To be honest, I backed into history. I was not even a history major as an undergraduate, I was a mass communications major. Four of my degrees, two bachelor's and two master's, are in fields other than history. But while I was in graduate school at the University of New

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Mexico, I became fascinated with history as something that pulled together varieties of concerns and approaches better than any other discipline I knew.

**Quay:** What kinds of questions were you asking that were best framed by history?

**Cortés:** My formative moment in dealing with the past in connection with the future came in 1971, when I was invited to participate on the State of California's History/Social Science Textbook Task Force. That year was the first time that there had been a major public protest about the misrepresentation of minority groups in California history and social studies textbooks. Protesters charged that textbooks submitted for adoption did not meet the California Education Code, which called upon all textbooks to provide fair representation of minorities.

In the four-week period during which the task force met, I interacted with numerous scholars of different ethnic backgrounds and heard new questions, different interpretations, and special concerns about what this misrepresentation meant for kids going to school and studying history in California. I suddenly realized the power of history and the importance of the way we look at history -- not just important for scholarly clarification or academic conferences, but for the way our citizens of the future think about themselves and think about how they fit into this long process of history.

**Quay:** So now, 20 years later, it would seem to the lay person that the same questions are still being raised. Do you see a difference?

**Cortés:** Well, many of the same questions are being raised, but what is really fascinating is that the ground rules of the debate have shifted so radically. In 1971, we were mainly talking about getting some kind of token inclusion of minorities. Now we're talking about basic historical re-interpretation. It's no longer just a matter of saying, "Let's add a picture of Sitting Bull or César Chávez."

We've moved from the stage of token textbook inclusion to insisting on including different ethnic perspectives, which ultimately means rethinking the core of what the American experience and the global experience have been. The ante has been raised to the point that some people who were openly opposed to

the kinds of changes being advocated in the mid-seventies are now claiming to be in the vanguard of multiculturalism, while others have become hysterical, accusing multiculturalism of being a threat to our society.

What this shows is that the debate has changed dramatically. The argument is no longer just over inclusion -- that's a battle virtually won. The battle isn't even over adding different perspectives, but rather how deeply into the core do we cut as we revise? As long as all you're doing is making token changes on the fringes, but leaving the grand narrative of history alone, that's okay. But not once you start asking basic questions about American history and its relationship to the American future. Multiculturalism, including the rethinking of history in a multiculturalist fashion, has become so powerfully successful that now it is viewed as a real threat to the defenders of the traditional, mythological past.

**Quay:** Is it possible to have a multi-centered interpretation of history?

**Cortés:** Yes, we need multi-centered interpretations. We can't operate any longer on the old tunnel-visioned, Eurocentric perspective alone. We've got to be multi-centric, but at the same time recognizing that the Western tradition is the most powerful of the centrismisms that have shaped America. But recognizing the primacy of the western tradition is different from teaching it as our exclusive tradition. That's where false dichotomizing comes in: the Bill Bennetts of the world would like education to go back to a kind of western-centric, exclusivist approach, while some extreme Afrocentrists argue that all cultural-centric perspectives should have an equal part of the curriculum. But there is another position, a multiculturalist position, that argues that different centrismisms and perspectives should be recognized and represented, without claiming that they have had an equal influence on the American historical process.

**Quay:** You used the word "primacy" just now. To assert a primacy is one thing, to assert a superiority would be something else. I think it's one thing to say that the Eurocentric interpretation of history has been dominant, or primary, in this culture. It's another thing to say it's superior.



**Cortés:** That's right. I would argue that until recently, the western tradition has been presented not as primary, but rather as exclusive – exclusive and superior. Now we're talking about exposing students to multiple perspectives, among which the western tradition has a primacy of influence, but which does not make it automatically superior. The pedagogical challenge is to implement a multicultural approach and to keep it dynamic, continuously open to new ideas.

I would argue that what we *don't* want is a new tightly integrated grand narrative, but rather to keep the historical narrative open, with new voices being heard and added in a continuous fashion, as opposed to locking into a new static truth, replacing an old grand narrative with a new grand narrative, even though that new one is more multicultural. If you just create a new narrative which is more multicultural, but is still as rigid as you were in the past, you're just more multiculturally rigid. Our challenge is to continue to re-look and rethink about history in our society, keeping it open enough to allow new perspectives to come in – not destroying the core, but continuously adding to, enriching, rethinking and revising the core.

**Quay:** I'm wondering now, what new skills or perspectives or ways of thinking are necessary to live in a multi-centered world, or a multicultural world, rather than in the old world of the one grand narrative? People can't just add this narrative, add that narrative; they have to have some capacity for taking it in. Otherwise, I think there would be a certain exhaustion that would take place in having to learn all the stories.

**Cortés:** Absolutely. When I give multicultural workshops for teachers, they often express that concern. It's challenging, its unsettling. Teachers are having to move from comfortable Eurocentric history into this multicultural mixture, where they're asked to look at different people's points of view. It is much more comfortable if you're around people who share your exact point of view, and the same applies to teaching history. Now tougher questions are being asked, which can be unsettling. One of the goals of education ought to be helping students learn to function better while considering these multiple perspectives. This is opposed to educational ethnocentrism, by which if a point of view comes up that is different from your own, you reject it, simply because

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you've learned "the truth"; and that which conflicts with your beliefs must be rejected as not the truth.

**Quay:** We're talking about cultural pluralism or multiculturalism. Is a multicultural state something that California is, do you think, or something that it aspires to be?

**Cortés:** If you're talking just in terms of body counts, California is already a multicultural state. It encompasses many cultures. But is it a state that has developed a well-functioning multiculturalism, which balances both the imperatives of pluribus and the imperatives of unum? The answer is no; we're still struggling for that one.

The word multicultural is used so many ways that it often ends up being meaningless. For example, some place may be called multicul-

tural just because of multiple ethnic body counts; or multicultural is sometimes merely a catch-all term used to suggest recognition of the fact that we have different cultures actually operating in society; or other times it suggests respect, not just recognition, of other cultures.

But now we're moving into a new phase, in which we are asking how do we recognize, respect, and deal with this diversity and at the same time latch onto things that hold us together. The neoconservatives are right in arguing that if we merely operate as a series of parallel cultures, we lose the things that hold us together as a nation. But they're wrong in their effort to resolve that issue through a sort of a Eurocentric reimposition of a nineteenth-century, consensus vision of America. What we need is a new, dynamic twenty-first century vision of America, which incorporates the balancing act between the imperatives of pluribus and the imperatives of unum.

The Columbus debate symbolizes that quest. I don't think we've yet found fully successful ways of dealing with it. One of our problems is that Americans like simple, definitive answers; they don't really like continuing, unresolvable questions. I don't see how an increasingly multicultural state can operate on a set of stable, definitive answers; it must continually address new questions. One could talk endlessly about multicultural tolerance and celebrating diversity, but that would not help us address the intercultural issues that arise when Korean-American merchants open stores in African-American communities. All the rhetoric of celebrating diversity doesn't really engage that issue, and yet, if we can't help Korean merchants and Black communities learn to understand each other and operate in synch, then the whole multicultural experiment called California or America collapses. To me, that's symptomatic of the kind of challenges that a successfully functioning multicultural state has to address.

**Quay:** Do you think that the study of history and having to confront the judgments that we inevitably make on ancestors and historical figures make us more conscious of the judgments that may be made of us later?

**Cortés:** I doubt it. I don't think most of us sit around worrying about how we're going to be judged by history, although maybe we ought to.

**Quay:** Let's be optimistic and imagine that California goes your way, towards becoming a fully, successfully functioning multicultural state. Imagine that it's the 600th anniversary of Columbus's voyage. How would that California commemorate the anniversary? What differences can you imagine from the way we seem to be commemorating it right now?

**Cortés:** That's a wonderful question. I don't know, but maybe that's how I'll end my talk in June. ❖

## COLUMBUS & AFTER: RETHINKING THE LEGACY

**F**rom July 1 through August 1, the Council's touring chautauqua troupe will make its rounds in California. The group of scholar/dramatists will perform under an outdoor bigtop, with each of the four evenings devoted to dialogue with one character.

Columbus will speak the first night, followed by California mission founder Father Junípero Serra, 19th century westward expansionist Jessie Benton Fremont, and Nez Perce Chief Joseph. Moderator Jim Rawls will introduce the characters and provide historical background about the times in which they lived. Local entertainers will perform before the chautauquans begin. In addition, the characters will make a variety of appearances during their visit, and discussion groups and other related events will be offered.

### SANTA BARBARA:

July 1 - 4, 7:30 to 9 p.m. on De la Guerra Plaza, located between State and Anacapa. Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation and the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Committee. Contact: Jarrell Jackman, 805/ 965-0093

Chautauquans will also be appearing at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, local schools, and the county Education Office. The exhibit "Voyages to Freedom: 500 years of Jewish Life in Latin America" will be showing at El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park, June 20 to August 2.

### MERCED:

July 8 - 11, 7:30 to 9 p.m., at the Merced Open Air Theatre, Applegate Park. Contact: Susan Walsh, 209/ 384-6082

In Merced, plans include a public poetry reading and sign language instruction by Phil George (Chief

### SANTA CLARA:

July 15 - 18, 7:30 to 9 p.m., at Bellomy Field on the University of Santa Clara campus. Contact: Trudy Taliaferro 408/ 554-4989

The Santa Clara coordinating committee plans to offer widespread visits and workshops with the chautauquans, as well as the exhibits "Cahuilla Voices: We are Still Here" and "Seeds of Change." A special program on the Columbian controversy and legacy will be offered July 13 - 17 at a public Elderhostel on campus. The Santa Clara Public Library plans to hold a "children's chautauqua" and storytelling, and the Triton Museum will also feature a special program. On the De Anza College campus, a reading-and-discussion group will explore "Rethinking Columbus." Reading-and-discussion programs also begin at Los Gatos Public Library on May 13.

### UKIAH:

July 29 - August 1, 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Todd Grove Park on Park Blvd. Contact: Suzanne Abel-Vidor, 707/ 462-3370

In Ukiah, public workshops and talks for adults and children will be held throughout the four days. In addition, a specially created teachers' institute will bring together the chautauqua scholars and teachers in local schools. The exhibit "Edward S. Curtis and the Hudsons: Creating the Arts & Crafts Indian," will also be shown at Grace Hudson Museum.



Clockwise: Gregory Monahan (as Columbus), Donald Cutter (as Father Serra), Sally Roesch Wagner (as Jessie Benton Fremont), and Phil George (as Chief George). Photos by Keith Bowe.

Joseph), and "Stories from the Voyages" by Greg Monahan (Columbus). In addition, a reading-and-discussion group begins on April 30. The Smithsonian exhibit "Seeds of Change" will be showing, as will a second exhibit entitled "Native Sons and Daughters: A Look at the Yokut Indians of Central California."



# MOVING TOWARD A CENTER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

For the last three years, the Council has made three requests for proposals on the subject of "the common good." Awards in the third and last of these, "Political Dialogue and the Common Good," were made last September. The Council's interest in promotion of the common good will not end with this grants initiative; rather, it has now begun to shift to a new initiative, the establishment of a Center for the Common Good.

Last May, the Lilly Endowment, located in Indianapolis, awarded \$50,000 to the Council and Vesper International to fund preliminary research into the establishment of such a center. The assumption underlying this proposal was that American society is fracturing along a variety of faults -- economic, ethnic, and sectoral -- and that we have few public forums where values are explored openly, where safe dialogue can occur, and where the possibilities of democratic choices can be made meaningful. We proposed the Center for the Common Good as an antidote for these ills. Briefly, here is what led the Council to this diagnosis and this decision.

At its 1990 Retreat, the Council board voted to establish an advisory group to assist in the development of a public humanities center. Though dozens of humanities centers had been established on the nation's campuses during the 1980s, none of them were devoted to the *public* humanities; the Council's board asked its executive director, Jim Quay, to fashion a prospectus for such a center. During 1991, Quay was invited to attend a conference in Germany by Harlan Stelmach, president of Vesper International, which works with the German Evangelical Academies, a possible model for the public humanities center. These academies have been presenting conferences of various kinds on a broad range of issues for nearly 45 years, issues familiar to the Council, such as "Society, Economy, Politics," "Multi-Cultural Society," and "Law and Justice."

What Quay saw in Germany transformed the concept of a public humanities center. What the academies were doing seemed consonant with the public humanities center but took the concept several steps further. The Lilly Endowment, also intrigued by the academy model, agreed to fund a preliminary research/reflection stage, and planning began in earnest.

Last summer, Martha Holstein joined the project as research director. Over the next six months, she conducted interviews with individuals, attended or facilitated meetings of religious leaders and humanities project directors, and visited four German Evangelical Academies. Meanwhile, Gordon Firestein explored ways that computers and telecommunications might further the Center's work.

## By Jim Quay

Jim Quay, the Council's executive director prepared this summary. Research director Martha Holstein and computer consultant Gordon Firestein contributed.

Most participants in Holstein's interviews and meetings brought examples from their personal and professional lives which only confirmed the project's underlying assumption. Dean Alan Jones of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, for example, saw a "pathetic absence of conversation about important things with individuals and institutions in this community." No one felt that such a Center would be redundant or unnecessary; almost all responded to our initiative with encouragement and a desire to contribute. The only reservation heard repeatedly was that the Center not be just another think tank and that it stand for something. No one, however, called the social diagnosis or the need for a Center into question.

We are still sorting out what we learned, but here is a brief summary of the main findings so far:

▣ The need for such a center was confirmed. As stated above, there is widespread confirmation of our analysis that American public life is fracturing and enthusiasm for the Center as a mitigating institution.

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▣ Partnerships are desirable and probably necessary. While members of the religious community are quite interested in the project, the denominations cannot be and should not be the sole funders or convenors of the Center. Yvonne Rand of the San Francisco Zen Center was encouraged by the non-sectarian nature of the project, while John Bennett, former head of the Union Theological Seminary, urged us *not* to narrow ourselves to the religious community because so many important thinkers and actors don't relate themselves to "religion."

On the other hand, the Council-funded Common Good project directors expressed frustration that humanities scholars are not, for the most part, publicly oriented and warned that the Council alone might lack the credibility to be the sole convener of the Center. Indeed, probably no one sector should "own" the Center, both to ensure broad participation and enhance credibility.

▣ The Center must stand for something. While the need for a disinterested convener was acknowledged, no one thought that the Center should simply be neutral, in the sense of a set of buildings or facilitators who bring nothing to the dialogues. Holstein's report contrasts the current value structure, described as "predominantly individualistic and competitive," with an "emerging

value paradigm" which would stress community, cooperation and commitment to human freedom.

Through this phase, some respondents saw the Center as espousing a value structure while others saw it espousing a process. The former feared that an emphasis on process alone would lead the Center to be a set of buildings without a standpoint; the latter feared that an emphasis on one set of values would jeopardize the Center's status as a neutral convener and make the Center another policy institute. Eventually, we came to see that a commitment to true dialogue implies a commitment to a set of values or conditions that makes true dialogue possible.

▣ The Center must provide a safe haven for dialogue. Dialogue remains the humanities' method for discovering meaning, as distinct from fundamentalism's reliance upon divine revelation or science's trust in experimental demonstration. The impediments to true dialogue are many: lack of opportunity for contestants to meet, lack of time when they do meet, lack of a disinterested facilitator, imbalance of power among contestants, ignorance of the others' histories and values, and lack of trust. The Center must work hard to overcome these and other impediments so that the most difficult topics can be discussed.

▣ The Center must be able to bring a broad spectrum of opinion to the dialogue. Fears about the Center being another "think tank" were widespread. The Center cannot be a place where people talk about problems which other people have; it should be a place where can people talk about *their* problems. Our experience during the research phase

indicated that assaults on human dignity are the toughest issues for privileged people -- what Robert Reich calls "the fortunate fifth" -- to listen to and discuss.

The German Evangelical Academies insist that all affected parties be brought together in any discussion about an issue and strive to create an atmosphere in which all can engage in discussion as equals. Their standpoint comes from their religious values: peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. The academies believe that the best way to make a difference is at a distance from the political heat in circumstances where all parties agree to listen, to respect the opinions of others, and even to change their minds.

▣ Computer-based dialogue could increase the Center's impact. On the technical side, online networks offer users a sense of place and community that, despite its "virtual" existence, seems very real to them; online networks enable people to participate in dialogue who would not otherwise be able to do so; computer-based dialogue, consisting of "written" as opposed to spoken conversation, is often more literate than face-to-face conversations. It offers participants the opportunity to edit their own and others' comments and to create an automatic transcript of the dialogue. People who lack expository and critical reading skills are at a disadvantage in this medium, and reading comments and writing responses requires more self-discipline and time than the equivalent spoken conversation.

Possibilities for integrating computer-based dialogue and online networks into the Center for the Common Good include: conducting "shadow" conferences that

## Arriving at the German Social Compact

The academies were founded by the German Evangelical Churches after World War II to help integrate a shattered German society. They began with an emphasis on the consequences of Nazism, then moved to vocational and cross-sectoral work when the first strikes occurred in the early 1950s. This cross-sectoral work seemed quite compatible with the Council's mission to bring the humanities into public life and its current work on community and the "Common Good" initiative. Over the years, the academies' conferences have brought together representatives of labor, business, government, church, and university, and they're given much credit for the "social compact" that exists among the various sectors in Germany today.

Some observers have suggested that such academies could only have flourished in a relatively homogeneous society such as Germany's, but conversations with Fritz Anhelm, general secretary for the academies, revealed that the

academies did not draw on any heritage of dialogue or social cohesion; on the contrary, the academies' work has helped create the relatively cooperative social atmosphere that now seems so "natural."

Each academy is connected to a regional church, but the academies themselves, not the churches, name representatives to the board that governs them. Funding is 50-60% from the churches, 10-20% from the federal government (for specific program areas), and 30% from fees. Each academy has specific "focal points" on which it presents programs. A team of conference leaders at each academy is responsible for several of these points. Each member of the team is in touch with a working group of scholars who monitor issues, make contacts, and consult on conferences. These conferences may be open to the public or limited to experts or members of a specific vocation.



*The impediments to true dialogue are many: lack of opportunity for contestants to meet, lack of time when they do meet, lack of a disinterested facilitator, imbalance of power among contestants, ignorance of the others' histories and values, and lack of trust.*

mirror the in-person conferences held at the Center; recruiting participants and publicizing the Center's activities; preparing participants for face-to-face meetings; following-up face-to-face meetings; enabling distant experts to participate remotely in the Center's activities; conducting surveys and testing ideas on "outside" populations.

In the next phase, the Council and Vesper International plan to pursue development of a Center by conducting pilot Center projects. An early concept paper identified three important functions for such a center: (a) a SPONSOR of projects which the Council is uniquely equipped to present; (b) a statewide and national CLEARINGHOUSE for public humanities activities and public forums; and (c) a CONVENER for those sectors, ethnic groups, and professions which need to talk together about common problems and common values.

All these represent occasions to test ideas, formats, and partnerships that will be useful in developing the Center. The humanities, the Council has found, can create an umbrella sufficiently broad to bring many organizations beneath it. The Council's "Common Good" initiative, its thematic emphasis on community, and its growing experience at making connections within communities make it a natural leader in this area.

*We came to see that a commitment to true dialogue implies a commitment to a set of values or conditions that makes true dialogue possible.*

We have learned that "dialogue" as we mean it has embedded in it both process and substantive values. "Standing for dialogue," therefore implies the acceptance of these values and the rejection of a purely neutral stance.

The dictionary defines dialogue as a conversation between two or more people, a definition that participants in our research have expanded to include four assumptions or ground rules: 1) the conversation must be

civil, that is, without rancor; 2) the conversants must suspend their own points of view long enough to listen to others; 3) each conversant must try to acknowledge and understand the meaning of the others' words; and 4) each conversant must be willing to change his or her mind.

If values are principles or standards considered worthwhile, process values become worthwhile principles about *how* a conversation is conducted. The process values implicit in our definition of dialogue are the openness to the views of others and the willingness to engage in a process that may lead to change, personal and perhaps social.

Substantive values apply to the *meaning* of the words exchanged. The implied substantive values, or the standards governing the content of the dialogue, include these:

- respect for others, which is a prerequisite to a willingness to listen, to acknowledge another's view, and to really understand it
- affirmation of the unconditional human dignity of *all* people, which is prerequisite to respect
- commitment to work toward the realization of a world characterized by this respect and manifest dignity
- recognition of the interdependence of individuals within society, that the good of the individual is inextricably linked to the good of society.

The greatest contribution that the Center can make may well be that -- beyond the conflicts resolved, or the partnerships formed, or the insights gained -- people who come to the Center absorb the values of dialogue and reflect those values in their daily lives.

The Council is committed to approaching the Lilly Endowment and other funders for multi-year funding for the next phase of the Center's development. The pilot projects that the Council will contribute to the Center include the convening of California's "2000" groups, which are ad hoc organizations that have sprung up in the last five years, often in recognition that the normal decision-making processes are constricted or narrow in representation. Such groups often focus on issues of leadership and economic development; the Center would encourage them to focus on multicultural, civic, and community literacy as well. We aim to convene

representatives of such groups both to survey their needs and observations about their regions and to present the Council's experience in working with regional humanities coalitions. In this sense, the Center would be testing its role as a "clearing-house."

Based on what is learned from this meeting, the Council will work to develop a reader modeled upon its well-received 1991 anthology, *Longing for Community: Dream or Nightmare?* Perhaps the subject will be public life, perhaps leadership; in some way, the reader will attempt to present a variety of perspectives on its theme drawn from several centuries and several cultures. The Center would then attempt to interest local organizations in using this reader in a series of public discussions. Those discussions would be laboratories for the kind of deep discussion and dialogue the Center hopes to foster. This project would test the "sponsor" function of the Center.

Finally, the Council will test its role as a "convener" by bringing together groups who should be in dialogue but are not. The board's Program Committee has suggested bringing together people who do not vote with elected officials, but a convening of other groups is also

possible. The word "dialogue" has been diminished into a group technique and lost much of its power and depth; as the quintessential tool of the humanities, however, dialogue has much to offer. Public dialogue in this country is the captive of monological media or debaters who don't listen. The Center must learn to be a place where value assumptions are identified, stories are heard, and histories acknowledged.

An ideal location for such a center would be one accessible to the public, yet affording a setting that suggests removal from ordinary business for the purpose of reflection and dialogue. We are following the course of planning for conversion of the Presidio Army Base into a national park, but the development of a center does not depend upon the availability of any single location. We hope to secure funding that will enable us to broaden the conversation about the Center to those regions and sectors that could make use of it.

Copies of the Council's report on the first phase are available from the Council. Please write or call the San Francisco office if you would like to receive one. ❖

## "Political Dialogue" Projects Launch Events

Last September, the Council made two awards for multifaceted projects about "Political Dialogue and the Common Good." One was called "Rethinking California's Public Life," sponsored by the Center for California Studies in Sacramento, which has held a series of public meetings and a large conference this year about the current collapse of political participation in the state and ways to revitalize public dialogue.

"Californians in Dialogue for the Common Good" was a second large, collaborative proposal that received Council support. This statewide project includes training in citizen skills, media literacy workshops, public discussions with scholars, and an electronic media network.

Although only three sponsoring organizations were listed in our Fall 1991 issue of *Network*, a number of other co-sponsors were active in creating the project and are planning public events in the coming months. These organizations are located throughout the state: California Chapter of the Sociological Practice Association in San Bernardino and College of the Desert in Palm Desert, Dialogues for Democracy in Eureka, Koppelman and Associates in Berkeley, and Global Peace Studies at San Francisco State University.

Project events scheduled by these groups so far include a summer community workshop in San Francisco and a fall conference in Palm Desert. On June 27, "Living Democracy in a Media Age" offers an all-day citizen's empowerment workshop at San Francisco State University. Speakers and participants will create a platform and the tools needed for action on pressing issues such as job creation, education, healthcare, multicultural empowerment, and tax reform, as well as ending hunger and homelessness and meeting children's needs (coordinated by Mara Keller, 415/338-1592).

On October 10, the College of the Desert in Palm Desert will hold a public event entitled "The Democracy Conference" (coordinated by Terry L. Green, 619/773-2561). Project participants are planning to include a variety of public discussion experiences during the day, including outdoor soapbox speakers and conversations with elected officials.

For additional information about other plans for "Californians in Dialogue for the Common Good," please contact Howard Frederick, project director, at the Institute for Global Communications, 818/578-1372.



# Calendar of Humanities Events

Please note: Dates and times should be confirmed with local sponsors. These listings are often provided to the Council well before final arrangements are made.

## EXHIBITS

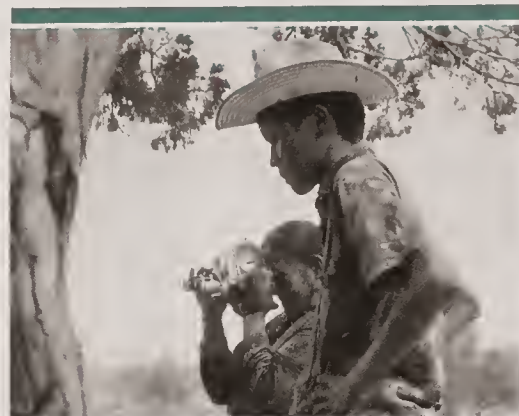
- Through May 24** "Objects of Myth and Memory" is an exhibit of Native American arts collected by R. Stewart Culin in the early twentieth century. At the Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. 510/ 273-3842
- Through Sept. 7** "Continuing Traditions: Japanese Americans, Story of a People 1869-1992" is an exhibit with public programs at the Sacramento History Museum, 101 I Street, Sacramento 916/ 449-2057
- Through Nov. 13** "The Ohlone Indians of the Bay Area: A Continuing Tradition" is an exhibit about the contributions of Native Americans past and present, at CSU Hayward, 4047 Meiklejohn Hall. Hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday - Friday (other times may be arranged for groups). 510/ 881-3104
- Apr. 24** "Mendocino County Portraits" opens at the Mendocino County Museum, 400 East Commercial St., Willits, open Wed - Sat., 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. 707/ 459-2736
- May 8 - June 28** "The History of the Portuguese in West Marin" is an exhibition sponsored by the Bolinas Museum that will focus on the Portuguese immigrants from the Azores who moved to West Marin to become diary farmers, fishermen, and cattle ranchers. At the Bolinas Museum. 415/ 868-0330
- May 22 - Nov. 30** "Country Voices: Three Generations of Japanese American Farming" is an exhibit and series of public programs at the Fresno Metropolitan Museum, 1515 Van Ness Avenue, Fresno. 209/ 441-1444
- June 28** "The California Hotel History Project" opens its exhibit and accompanying public events focusing on an Oakland landmark for Black entertainment and social life. At San Pablo Avenue and 35th Streets in Oakland. Please call 510/ 638-3106 to receive more information and to confirm date.

## EVENTS

- May 8** "Civil Rights Activism in Japan Today and its Link to Diversity Issues in the U.S." is a panel discussion with scholars from Japan and the Bay Area, at 7 p.m., Nile Hall, Preservation Park, 668 13th Street, Oakland. 510/ 845-7746
- May 9** "Issei Lives: Japanese Americans in Hawaii and the Continental U.S." is a lecture exploring the differences in behavior and attitude between Americans of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii and those in the Continental U.S. At the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, 244 S. San Pedro Street, North Gallery, Los Angeles, from 1:30 pm - 4:30. 213/ 625-0414
- May 11** "Ethics and the Controversy over the Columbus Quincentennial" is a symposium addressing different points of view about the anniversary of the Columbian voyages. At 7 p.m., the Benson Center-Williman Room, Santa Clara University. 408/ 554-5319
- May 13 - June 3** "Columbus & After" reading-and-discussion group begins at 7 p.m., organized by the Los Gatos Public Library. Please call 408/ 354-6891 for more information.
- May 21-23** "After Columbus - The Musical Journey" is a conference on cultural exchange in the New World, focusing on little-known musical pieces from eighteenth century Imperial Spain, now California and Mexico. Composers of both sacred and secular music whose work will be discussed and then performed include Indians and African Americans. In room 214 of the Music Building at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, beginning at 9 a.m. each morning. 805/ 756-1547 (Craig Russell)
- May 22-23** "Ancient Songs in a Modern World" is a conference about the role music has played in cultural survival for native Californians, at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts. The day after the conference, May 24, the annual Malki Fiesta will take place on the Morongo Reservation near Banning in Riverside County. 213/ 825-7315 (Duane Champagne)
- May 23** "Pangarap: Filipino American Literature" will present a forum to discuss contemporary issues in Filipino literature and interpretation. At California State University, Hayward, Music and Business Building from 8:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m. 510/ 881-3173

- May 23** "Images of Others: Cultural Representation in the Media," a public symposium that is part of the National Educational Film & Video Festival, will consider the history of visual documentation of the "other," particularly the photography and ethnographic records of Edward S. Curtis and other turn-of-the-century photographers whose work created images of Native Americans. At the Oakland Museum, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. 510/ 465-6885

Films by and about Native Americans will be screened as part of the program "Images of Others." Photo at right from "Navajos Film Themselves," is courtesy of the National Educational Film & Video Festival (see listing above).



- May 30** "Humanities Study Program on Israel" is a day-long workshop to be held at Mendocino College, addressing Israel's place in the Middle East, religious perspectives, and women's role in society. 707/ 468-8632
- June 11** "Backing into the Future: Columbus, Cleopatra, Custer, & California's Diversity Revolution" is the Council's 10th Annual Public Lecture, delivered by U.C. Riverside historian and multi-cultural trainer Carlos Cortés. At 8 p.m., Mother Olson's Inn, 72 North Fifth Street, San Jose. 415/ 391-1474
- June 13** "The Uprooted: A Comparison of Immigration from Asia and Europe" is a lecture exploring the differences and similarities in the experiences of European and Asian immigrants to America. At the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, 244 S. San Pedro Street, North Gallery, Los Angeles, from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.. 213/ 625-0414
- June 27** "Living Democracy in a Media Age" is a citizen's workshop about putting the government to work for the common good, at San Francisco State's McKenna Theater, 19th and Holloway. 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. 415/ 338-1592
- July 1 - Aug. 1** "Columbus & After: Rethinking the Legacy" is a traveling chautauqua program, in which scholars portray historical characters from the past 500 years. Santa Barbara, Merced, Santa Clara, and Ukiah will host the events (see page 3).
- July 11** "Abiko Kyutaro (1865-1936) A Far-sighted Issei Pioneer" is a lecture examining the role of this influential newspaper publisher and early immigrant leader who advocated that the Issei should settle down permanently in the U.S. At the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, 244 S. San Pedro Street, North Gallery, Los Angeles, from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. 213/ 625-0414

## 'JEFFERSON' RETURNS TO CALIFORNIA

Rhodes scholar Clay Jenkinson, in character as Thomas Jefferson, stirred audience members in Riverside last summer to a renewed spirit of independence and civic involvement. This spring he has returned, offering his perspectives on Jefferson's dream and today's realities in California.

- April 30** At San Bernardino Valley College and the Feldheym Library in San Bernardino. 714/ 888-6511, x1568
- May 1** At the Stark Youth Training School in Chino, speaking to incarcerated youth who are working toward their high school diplomas. 310/ 698-6781, x371
- May 2** At the Riverside County Courthouse. 714/ 689-0946
- May 3** At the Temecula Branch Library, Temecula. 714/ 676-4494
- May 20 - 22** In Ukiah, appearances include a 7 p.m. interview on KZYX Public Radio on May 20, a noontime program at Mendocino College on May 21, and a public forum at the Methodist Church (7:30 p.m.) on Friday, May 22. 707/ 468-3105



# Humanities News

## Governor Appoints New Council Members

In February, Governor Wilson appointed three new members to the Council, each beginning her three-year term this March.

*Sharleen Cooper Cohen* is a novelist from Encino whose most recently published book is *Lives of Value*. The author of a number of popular novels about life in Hollywood and Southern California, she has pursued studies in English and writing at U.C. Berkeley and UCLA, respectively.

*Jane Cody McNall* is an associate professor emerita at the University of Southern California, where she teaches classics on a part-time basis. She holds a doctorate in Latin from Bryn Mawr College and is a board member of the American Philological Association and a member of the Archeological Institute of America.

*Marie G. Kelley* is a filmmaker and writer from La Jolla, who has worked on film and television documentaries as well as commercials. Documentaries produced by Kelley Productions, of which she is president, have included programs on community and economic development in Jamaica, Mexico and Peru. She has won three "CINE Golden Eagle" awards for her work, as well as a CLIO award.

## Inland Empire Forms Humanities Coalition

Last year's project "Longing for Community: Dream or Nightmare?" started a major reaction in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Bonds developed among local planners and participants, who liked the idea of continuing to work together to bring humanities programs to the area. The result is something called the Inland Empire Humanities Coalition.

The Council has given a boost to this newly formed coalition by allocating start-up funding to support a part-time staff person. Karen Kraut will coordinate existing activities and expand the web of communication even further into these two large counties (geographically, the size of all of New England!).

Both the Inland Empire Community Newspapers in San Bernardino and the Riverside Arts Foundation have offered donated space. The Inland Empire Educational Foundation, which is a two-county nonprofit organization, will serve as an umbrella organization, including the coalition as its new "Humanities Division."

At its first official meeting in January, members of the coalition decided to meet quarterly and to form two committees: a Program Committee to propose ideas for projects and collaborations and to invite new groups and individuals to participate, and a Development Committee to focus on fund raising and administrative assistance.

Projects planned so far include "Longing for Community II," a reading-and-discussion program to be presented in Barstow, Palm Springs and Victorville; and a series of public portrayals of Thomas Jefferson by acclaimed scholar Clay Jenkinson (see calendar at left). Four different community organizations are hosting events in the two-county area.

Programs for the next three years are currently under discussion. Possibilities abound. To join the coalition, suggest a humanities program, or obtain further information, please contact Karen Kraut at IEEF-Humanities Division, P.O. Box 6247, San Bernardino, CA 92412-6247, (714) 888-3113.

## Wild by Law Nominated for Oscar

The film *Wild by Law: Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshall, Howard Zahniser and the Redefinition of American Progress* was nominated for an Academy Award as best documentary of 1991. Produced by Lawrence Hott and Diane Garey of Florentine Films, it tells the story of three men who played huge roles in persuading Americans that wild places and creatures deserved national respect and protection.

The film begins with the story of forester Aldo Leopold, who brought new ethical perspectives to questions of human relationships with nature, and that of the Wilderness Society's eccentric founder, Bob Marshall. In the 1960s, bureaucrat Howard Zahniser lobbied unceasingly in Washington, D.C., for the passage of the landmark Wilderness Act.

*Wild by Law* received funding from the California Council for the Humanities, as well as the state councils in Wisconsin, Arizona, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado, and is distributed by Direct Cinema, (800) 525-0000.



*Bob Marshall, founder of the Wilderness Society. Photo courtesy of Wild by Law.*

## Development Director Joins Council Staff

With many new plans and projects under way, the Council has decided to look for private sources of additional funding. Elliot Klein has become its newest staff member, whose charge is working with Council members to create a fund-raising program. For the past two years, he has served as director of development for Opera San Jose, and other experience includes six years as administrator for music at the California Arts Council. Klein holds a master's degree in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University.

## Minigrants Available on Community, Quincentenary Themes

The Council is accepting requests for minigrants up to \$1,500 to sponsor public events using materials already created:

### ❑ Longing for Community: Dream or Nightmare?

The Council's anthology called "Longing for Community: Dream or Nightmare?," produced in 1991 for a well-received series in the Riverside and San Bernardino area, is available for reading-and-discussion groups. Using the brief literary pieces as a basis for discussion, participants consider aspects of community life and visions of the kind of communities they would like to live in. The anthology includes short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels by such writers as James Baldwin, John Steinbeck, Tomas Rivera, Shirley Jackson, Ray Bradbury and many more. Each of the writings looks at themes of utopia, the "California dream," dystopia, or living in community. Copies of the book will be provided free of charge to all participants. A humanities scholar from a local college or university serves as discussion leader.

For further information about "Longing for Community," please contact Susan Gordon at the Los Angeles office, 213/ 623-5993.

### ❑ Voyages to Freedom: 500 Years of Jewish Life in Latin America and the Caribbean

This exhibit commemorates the Quincentary of Columbus's voyage and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, as well as tracing Jewish life and contributions in Latin America from 1492 to the present.

### ❑ Seeds of Change

This traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit explores the ways that both the New and Old Worlds have been altered physically and culturally by the "seeds"—plants, animals, and diseases—that were exchanged as the result of the Columbian voyages.

Organizations wishing to plan public programs featuring either of these exhibits should consider calling a program staff member to develop a minigrant proposal.

## Minigrants Awarded

The California Preservation Foundation has received \$1,500 to present a public program on cultural conservation in Humboldt County, in conjunction with the 1992 California Preservation Conference. The panel discussion took place in Eureka on April 24.

"Journeys," a project sponsored by San Francisco's Intersection for the Arts, received a \$1,500 minigrant. The award will support work by scholars and artists to create bus shelter displays on local ethnic and neighborhood history. The displays, along with an accompanying map/guidebook, are scheduled to appear in fall 1992.

Berkeley's Japan Pacific Resource Network will sponsor a series entitled "California and the Pacific Century," exploring issues of intercultural and international tensions, scheduled during April, May, September, and November. The minigrant award was \$1,500.

In San Jose, a conference entitled "Diversity, Free Speech, and Political Correctness" received a \$1,500 minigrant. The event brought together local scholars, community leaders, and the public to explore such issues as affirmative action, hate speech, and multicultural curricula. The sponsor was San Jose State University.

At U.C. Berkeley's International House Auditorium, a program exploring identity and assimilation among Iranians in California took place April 4. For the afternoon event, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies received a \$1,500 minigrant.

A symposium on the role of mass media and universities in the changing Russian Republic took place in February at CSU Fullerton. To present lectures by visiting Russian scholars Victor Yugin and General Sergei Stepashin the university received \$1,350.

"Feminist Writing Inside and Outside the University" was the theme of readings and discussions during April at U.C. Berkeley. Topics included the politics of publishing and new voices in academic feminist writing. To sponsor the conference, the Department of English received a \$750 minigrant.



# CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The California Council for the Humanities is an independent, nonpartisan and nonpolitical organization whose mission is to bring the insights of history, literature, philosophy and related disciplines to the adult public throughout the state. Since its creation in 1975, the Council has awarded more than \$12 million to over a thousand nonprofit organizations to create public humanities programs on topics of interest to Californians.

The Council receives nearly all of its funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and expects to award more than \$650,000 in outright and matching funds during 1992. The grants program solicits humanities projects dealing with contemporary issues, California life, and texts, methods, and perspectives of the humanities not specifically focused on California.

We encourage a diversity of ethnic groups to tell their stories, as well as variety of subject and format. Projects funded include lecture series, reading and discussion groups, conferences, and exhibits. To reach the state's huge audiences, the Council consistently awards 35-45 percent of its funds to broadcast media projects that use public radio and television to bring humanities programming to millions of viewers and listeners.

Major grant proposals are accepted on April 1 and October 1. Proposal planning grant requests for up to \$750, minigrant requests for up to \$1,500, and Film-&-Speaker minigrant requests for up to \$500 may be submitted at any time. Interested nonprofit organizations should request a free copy of the 1992 Guide to the Grant Program from the San Francisco office.

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## S

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Elliot Klein  
*Director of Development*

## T

## A

Stan Yogi  
*Program Officer*

Jeannie Mac Gregor  
*Program Officer*

Joanne Huddleston  
*Editor*

## F

## F

Rosalino Dizon  
*Grants Administrator*

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## NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: October 1, 1992

Proposals must conform to the 1992 Guide to the Grant Program. Send 10 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

# HUMANITIES

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